

Mechanicsville, MD – Congressman Steny Hoyer (MD-05) presented a check for \$110,950 to the Mechanicsville Volunteer Fire Department today. The funds are a federal Assistance to Firefighters Grant, a program that Congressman Hoyer helped establish. Mechanicsville VFD Chief, Robert Johnson, and Mechanicsville VFD President, William Wilkerson, received the check on behalf of the Department.

“The fire grant program was established because Congress recognized that too many of the brave men and women who risk their lives to protect our homes and our families have been doing so without the modern equipment and advanced training they deserve,” said Hoyer.

As co-chair of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, Congressman Hoyer was very active in helping establish and fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, which helps local fire departments in Maryland and across the country buy equipment and provide adequate training.

Congress established the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program to mirror the federal commitment that has been made to the law enforcement community by the very successful COPS Program. Over the past four years, since the inception of the program, more than \$2.5 billion has been provided for grants to fire departments around the country. Since 2001, Maryland has received nearly \$27 million in grant funding from the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program.

Congressman Hoyer helped start the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program because fire departments often have difficulty purchasing proper equipment. A ladder truck for a local fire department can run upwards of \$750,000 and outfitting one firefighter with turnout gear and breathing apparatus can approach \$4,500. In addition, departments must fund training programs for paid and/or volunteer firefighters.

The program funding can be used for the following: turnout gear; breathing apparatus; communications equipment; wellness and fitness programs; computer and technology improvements for record keeping and training purposes; training in fire-fighting, emergency response and arson prevention; improving the enforcement of fire codes; and modifying fire stations and fire training facilities to protect the health and safety of the firefighter personnel.

The money awarded to Mechanicsville will be used to purchase forty-seven sets of turnout gear, to include helmets, boots, hoods and gloves. The Department will also purchase a gear washer and a gear dryer.

“The fire grant program said to the men and women of the fire service, that we understand and appreciate the sacrifices that you make, and the risks that you take, and that we are going to make sure you can do your job as safely and effectively as possible,” added Hoyer.